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Book Review

Adrian James (2016) *Understanding Police Intelligence Work*. Bristol: Polity Press ISBN: 9781447326410 paperback, £15.99. 172 pages

Adrian James' *Understanding Police Intelligence Work* offers a comprehensive guide to understanding the structures, methods, cultures, and challenges of intelligence policing in the UK. James' experience as a formal intelligence officer with the Metropolitan Police is clear throughout this book, demonstrating his expert knowledge in intelligence, past and present decision-making processes, and the future challenges facing the organizations involved. The basis of the book stems from four decades of James' experience working and researching police intelligence work and aims to offer contemporary insights into the varying obstacles and ethical dilemmas that encompass much of the intelligence work carried out in the UK. The text is informed by a series of research projects undertaken by the author. These projects included the implementation of the National Intelligence Model (NIM; 2003–07, 2009–10), investigatory practices of law enforcement (2012–14) and a nationwide study of law enforcement intelligence in the UK (2013–15). The data that informs the book is of mixed methods drawing on primary interview and survey data with policymakers and practitioners, document analysis of official reports, and researcher field notes. Credit is given to James who, while aimed to produce an objective overview of intelligence work, acknowledges that subjective experiences invariably seep into the writing, and it is these experiences that give the book a fresh approach.

The book consists of nine chapters commencing with the fundamentals of intelligence work through to the future of intelligence work. Chapter 1 offers an introduction into intelligence work tracing developments in the intelligence cycle, intelligence network analysis, and the application of criminological theory. The inclusion of theory is articulated to suit those even who have not studied academically. This then moves on nicely to Chapter 2 that contextualizes these fundamentals in practice. Chapters 3 and 4 critically examine the complexities of intelligence work, particularly when considering the multifaceted nature of the organizations involved at the national and international levels.

In Chapter 5, the author covers the intelligence processes, with particular discussion around the development of the NIM. While tracing the evolution of the model the author is also focused on highlighting the need for much greater staff training, particularly if policing is to take full advantage of the scope of NIM. Following on from this, Chapter 6 presents the reader with one of the biggest challenges of police intelligence work, which is the political pressure. While James acknowledges the necessity of close political working relationships, he also stresses the importance of independent objective intelligence gathering, free from political bias. He calls for more attention to be paid to the tensions between police intelligence decision makers to allow for a more fully fledged evidence-led intelligence service.

Chapters 7–9 move the discussion to consider the contemporary challenges of police intelligence work, covering intelligence using big data, managing risk and accountability, and organizational changes. Chapter 7 provides a thoughtful discussion on intelligence in the digital age highlighting that while online communities and networks of social media offer an invaluable tool for gathering data, this comes with its own set of challenges, particularly in relation to breach of privacy and online security. Chapter 8 describes strategies of risk management in intelligence work, and James states quite clearly that while all should be done to minimize failure, some risks simply cannot be managed (p. 137). James concludes the book by suggesting ways to enhance the credibility of intelligence work in the future, stating clearly that while technological advances have assisted in the organization of intelligence work, data programming cannot entirely replace the human factor, which remains the key component of intelligence analysis.

A key underlying theme of each chapter is one of ethics and the line between moral infringements and vital police work. According to James, intelligence work is a requirement for national and international security, particularly in the face of terrorism and other such high security threats; however, the measures to which police go to in order to gather the necessary intelligence are questioned. For instance, Chapter 2 discusses the need for intelligence while questioning the boundaries of transparency and requirements of covert surveillance. These difficulties are well accomplished by James who offers a very honest balanced account of the controversies. This is discussed in even greater depth in Chapters 4 and 7, which both tackle the legislative frameworks in which police intelligence work operates in the physical and cyber worlds. Critical discussions around human rights, rights to privacy, and public right to freedom of information provide a thought-provoking debate when considered against the legislative powers of the police to intercept communication and use surveillance for information gathering. James argues that legislation can either be a help or a hindrance to their work and this really comes to light in Chapter 6 when the author places these frameworks within the political context. James is very careful throughout these discussions to offer an objective viewpoint, where possible, by presenting the requirements of police intelligence work against the backdrop of political pressures and human rights.

Similar to other functions of police work, intelligence work faces challenges in times of austerity, technological advancements, growing public scrutiny, and the desire to professionalize policing. James sees all of these as future challenges that require further analysis and places much of the responsibility on the police intelligence organizations to be more flexible, transparent, and credible.

Throughout the text, there are clear discussions of the roles of the various organizations and departments involved in police intelligence work. In particular, the reader comes to appreciate the challenges of inter-agency working, particularly when those relationships cross national borders. While the book achieved the aims of providing a comprehensive overview by describing in detail the various aspects

of intelligence work, it could have been enhanced with more reference to the fieldwork carried out in the research projects mentioned in the preface. This would have enabled the reader to ascertain whether the criticality provided in the book stemmed from personal experience of James himself or the experiences of those interviewed and surveyed during fieldwork.

The writing style is extremely accessible for varying levels of readers, the book is jargon free with concepts explained clearly and applied appropriately to the discussions. This text will appeal to new and experienced police officers working in intelligence, students studying policing, and academics researching the field, all of whom I would recommend this book to.